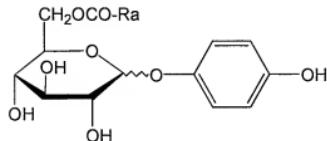


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Original): An arbutin ester compound represented by formula (1):

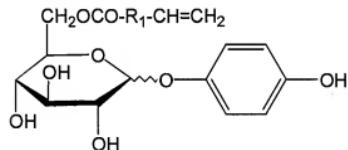
Formula (1)



wherein Ra is a hydrophobic group.

2. (Original): An arbutin ester compound according to claim 1, which is represented by formula (2):

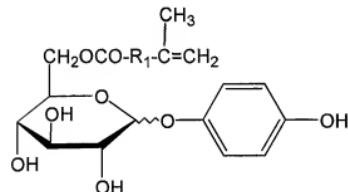
Formula (2)



wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

3. (Original): An arbutin ester compound according to claim 1, which is represented by formula (3):

Formula (3)

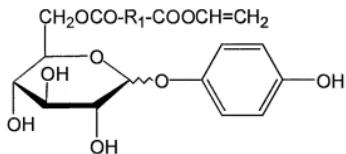


wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

4. (Original): An arbutin ester compound according to claim 1, which is represented by formula (4):

Formula (4)

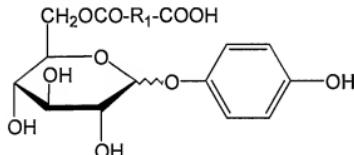
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wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

5. (Original): An arbutin ester compound according to claim 1, which is represented by formula (5):

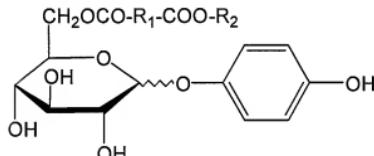
Formula (5)



wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

6. (Original): An arbutin ester compound according to claim 1, which is represented by formula (6):

Formula (6)

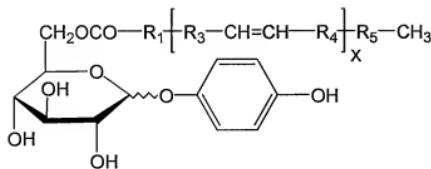


wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and R₂ is an alkyl group or an aryl group.

7. (Original): An arbutin ester compound according to claim 1, which is represented by formula (7):

Formula (7)

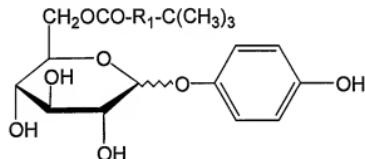
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wherein R₁, R₃, R₄ and R₅ are each independently a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and X represents a number of repeating units and is 1 to 6.

8. (Original): An arbutin ester compound according to claim 1, which is represented by formula (8):

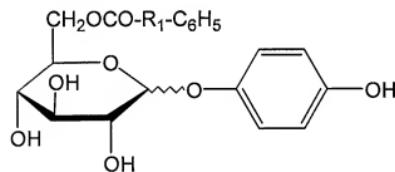
Formula (8)



wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

9. (Original): An arbutin ester compound according to claim 1, which is represented by formula (9):

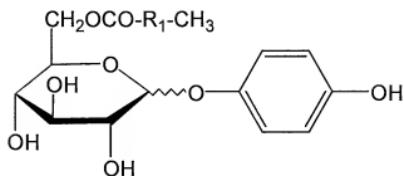
Formula (9)



wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

10. (Original): An arbutin ester compound according to claim 1, which is represented by formula (10):

Formula (10)



wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

11. (Previously presented): A tyrosinase inhibitor comprising, as an active ingredient, at least one of the arbutin ester compounds according to claim 1.

12. (Original): An external preparation for the skin, comprising the tyrosinase inhibitor according to claim 11.

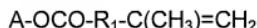
13. (Original): A process for producing an arbutin ester compound, comprising the step of carrying out an esterification reaction of arbutin with a carboxylic acid compound represented by one of formulae (11) to (19):

Formula (11)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group,

Formula (12)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (13)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (14)

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A-OCO-R₁-COOH

wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (15)

A-OCO-R₁-COO-R₂

wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and R₂ is an alkyl group or an aryl group;

Formula (16)

A-OCO-R₁-[-R₃-CH=CH-R₄-]_X-R₅-CH₃

wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; R₁, R₃, R₄ and R₅ are each independently a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and X represents a number of repeating units and is 1 to 6;

Formula (17)

A-OCO-R₁-C(CH₃)₃

wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (18)

A-OCO-R₁-C₆H₅

wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (19)

A-OCO-R₁-CH₃

wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

14. (Original): The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out in the presence of an enzyme catalyst.

15. (Original): The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out in the presence of a chemical catalyst.

16. (Original): The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out while performing a dehydration treatment.

17. (Original): The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification reaction step is followed by the steps of:

extracting and isolating unreacted carboxylic acid derivative(s) from the esterification reaction mixture with a nonpolar organic solvent; and subsequently,

adding excess water to extract and isolate unreacted arbutin and to precipitate the arbutin ester compound.

18-36 (Cancelled)